

NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
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For Immediate Release

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Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced that Charles Hemphill, 44, of Alton, who pled guilty on May 4, 2005 to 12 counts of possession of a machinegun, 1 count of possession of a machinegun receiver; 1 count of possession of a silencer with no serial number, and 1 count of possession of a destructive device (a hand grenade), was sentenced today in federal court in East St. Louis to 37 months' imprisonment, a \$3500 fine, a special assessment of \$1500, and 2 years' supervised release.

Hemphill is the first of eleven defendants who were charged in March, 2005, with similar crimes; all such other defendants have pled guilty and await sentencing, as summarized below.

1. Randal L. Brown, 45, of Alton, Illinois, pled guilty May 25, 2005, to: 18 counts of Possession of a Machinegun, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(o); 1 count of Possession of an Unregistered Destructive Device, in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 5861(d); 1 count of Possession of a Silencer with no Serial Number, in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 5861(i); and 1 count of Manufacturing Firearms Without Registration, in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 5861(a). Sentencing is set for September 2, 2005, at 11 a.m. In a Factual Stipulation filed with the Court, Brown acknowledged that he had engaged in manufacturing machineguns and destructive devices for at least ten years. The Stipulation also noted that a search of his residence on February 9, 2005 (made pursuant to a search warrant) resulted in seizure by ATF agents of: approximately 150 other destructive devices; approximately 20 pounds of explosive powders intended for use in destructive devices; and approximately six machinegun kits, consisting of parts intended for use in the manufacture of machineguns. The Stipulation also indicates that Brown abandoned thousands of rounds of ammunition and 38 other firearms to ATF. Additionally, the Stipulation indicates that Brown previously manufactured or sold the following to other defendants charged in related cases: 12 machineguns, 1 machinegun receiver, and 1 silencer to Charles Hemphill; 2 machineguns to Chris Hall; 4 machineguns to Mark Howard; 1 machinegun to Eric Terry; 1 machinegun to William Voigt; 1 machinegun to James Wehrle; and 2 machineguns to Chris

Howard. Finally, the Stipulation indicates that Brown manufactured a destructive device that was used by Laura Brown and Mark Howard to destroy a mailbox in a rural area near Alton, Illinois, on July 5, 2005. Laura Brown is Randal Brown's daughter. The Plea Agreement filed in this case indicates that Randal Brown has a prior felony conviction from 1986, in Madison County, for Possession of an Explosive/Incendiary Device.

2. James Dean Wehrle, 41, of St. Charles, Missouri, pled guilty May 19, 2005, in federal district court, East St. Louis, Illinois, to one count of Possession of a Machinegun in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(o). Sentencing is set for September 2, 2005, at 9 a.m.

3. Mark Chappell, 23, of Alton, Illinois, pled guilty on May 19, 2005, to one count of Possession of a Firearm (a Machinegun) and Ammunition by an Unlawful User of a Controlled Substance, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(3). Sentencing is set for September 9, 2005, at 10 a.m.

4. Mark Howard, of Alton, Illinois, pled guilty May 16, 2005, in federal district court, East St. Louis, Illinois, to: Aiding and Abetting the Destruction of Personal Property (a mailbox) by Explosive; Possession of a Destructive Device; Possession of a Machinegun (four counts); and Possession of Silencer with No Serial Number, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 844(i) and 922(o), and 26 U.S.C. § 5861(d) and 5861(i). In a Factual Stipulation entered by the parties, Howard acknowledged that he drove a co-defendant to a rural location on Torch Club Road in Alton, Illinois, on July 5, 2004, where the co-defendant detonated an explosive device that destroyed the mailbox. In the Stipulation, Howard also admitted to possessing eight explosive devices and four machineguns, as well as a silencer that had no serial number. Sentencing is set for Howard on October 1, 2:00 p.m., in federal court in East St. Louis.

5. Howard's co-defendant, Laura Brown, 25, of Godfrey, pled guilty on August 1, 2005, to Aiding and Abetting the Malicious Damage of Personal Property by Means of Explosive, Possession of an Unregistered Destructive Device; and Possession of a Machinegun, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 2, 844(i), 922(o), and 26 U.S.C. § 5861(d). In her Factual Stipulation, Brown admitted that she and Howard destroyed the above mailbox on Torch Club Road. Sentencing is set for October 31, 2005, at 8 a.m.

6. William Cody Voigt, of Alton, pled guilty to possession of a machinegun on May 16, 2005. Sentencing is set for September 12, 2005, at 11:00 A.M.

7. Eric Terry, of Alton, pled guilty May 5, 2005, to four counts of possession of a machinegun. Sentencing is set for September 16 at 1:30 p.m.

8. Chris Hall, of Alton, pled guilty May 13, 2005, to one count of possession of a machinegun. Sentencing is set for August 26 at 1:30 p.m.

9. Chris Howard, 41, of Godfrey, pled guilty July 25, 2005, to two counts of possession of a machinegun. Sentencing is set for October 28, 2005, at 11 a.m.

10. Michael Owens pled guilty August 1, 2005, to one count of possession of a machinegun and one count of possession of a silencer with no serial number, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(o) and 26 U.S.C. § 5861(i). Sentencing is set for October 31, 2005, at 11 a.m.

The maximum sentences that can be imposed for each count to which each defendant has pled guilty are 10 years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and 3 years' supervised release.

The cases were investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and were prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen B. Clark.